

May 20, 2004

House of Representatives Passes FY05 Defense Authorization  
*Bill includes Increase in Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Annuities*

Washington, D.C. -The U.S. House of Representatives today passed the authorization for fiscal year 2005, H.R. 4200. The bill authorizes funding for the U.S. military for fiscal year 2005 and includes an important measure designed to help survivors of military retirees.

The Defense Authorization eliminates the Social Security offset under the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) by increasing annuities paid to survivors of military retirees. The defense authorization also includes further funding for Boeing's EA-18G, a project spearheaded by Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO) who is a member of the House Armed Services.

"Providing for the national defense is the fundamental charge of the United States Congress," said Akin. "We must ensure that our men and women in uniform have the tools they need to successfully prosecute the war on terror, and this bill advances that critical goal.

"But just as importantly, this bill helps the families of military service men and women by providing an overall 3.5 percent across-the-board pay raise, increasing the maximum amount of hardship duty pay, making permanent the increased rates for imminent danger pay and increasing annuities paid to survivors of military retirees.

"Eliminating the reduction in benefits that a spouse of a veteran currently experiences when their spouse dies is only right and better reflects the debt that our nation owes to veterans," said Akin.